

[Richmond]

W15467

(dup of W15462)

"Why ain't you got your flag out?" says Mr. Richmond, entering the gas station in which he spends much of his time these days. "You know today is flag day, don't you?"

"I guess the boss forgot to buy a flag, George," says Mr. Davis, the station attendant. "And even if we had one, we ain't got no place to put it."

Mr. Richmond: "That's a fine state of affaird, that is. Here they are tryin' to bring hom home to you people the fact that you're livin' in one of the few countries where you can draw a free breath and you don't even know it. You're supposed to have flags out all this week. Don't you know that? This is flag day and this is flag week. Where's your patriotism?"

Mr. Davis: "What the hell are you hollerin' about, George? You're always runnin' the country down. They can't do anything to suit you. You're worryin' about taxes and future generations and all like that. Where's your patriotism?"

Mr. Richmond: "Well, that's different. A man got a right to criticize. That's free speech. Don't mean I ain't patriotic."

Mr. Davis: "Yeah, but nothin' pleases you."

Mr. Richmond: "Well, look at this new school, for instance. Who's gonna pay for that?"

Mr. Davis: "Don't start on that again."

Mr. Richmond: "Wells it's the truth ain't it? People live too damn much from hand to mouth these days. Like I was tellin' this fella the other day, talking about knifemakers——"

Mr. Davis: "Listen, you can't tell me nothin' about knifemakers. My old man was a knifemaker, and his old man before him. And my old man quit the job to go to work in the clock shop. You talk to my old man today and he'll probably tell you what a great trade knifemakin' was and how much he liked it and all that, but what the hell did he quit it for? It was damn tough work."

Mr. Richmond: "Sure it was tough work. But you could go out and get a job if you knew the trade, and you were sure of a day's pay. That's what I's drivin' at. You can't do that today. The jobs ain't there any more."

Mr. Davis: "George I been listenin' to you tell about how much better things used to be than they are now for a long time, and maybe you're part right, but in somethings you're away off. You claim they used to eat better, and all that, just because they had homemade bread and the women did more cookin'. Why, my God, they used to be sick half the time because they weren't eatin' right. They couldn't have fresh meat in the summer time, and all that, and every spring they were sick from eatin' too much heavy food all winter long. Why, the people on relief are eatin' better than the average family ate fifty years ago. They maybe ain't eatin' as much, but they're gettin' better food."

Mr. Richmond: "Well, look what you gotta pay for it. You get that stuff from down south and the western states and look what it costs you—"

Mr. Davis: "It don't cost you a damn bit more than what you get from this state, George, and it's just as good."

Mr. Richmond: "Take strawberries, for instance. They ain't growin' strawberries around here like they used to."

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Mr. Davis: "Like hell they ain't. You know Gleason, from Torrington, the fella that works here at the station? His people raise some of the best strawberries I ever ate. He brought some down the other night, and so help me, my wife cut up just a half a dozen of them, in half, and they filled a dish. That's how big they were."

Mr. Richmond: "Well, look at the work they have to put in on 'em. They got to transplant them vines every year, if they want a good crop—"

Mr. Davis: "What the hell's that got to do with it? You said they weren't raisin' strawberries in this state any more. I showed you where they were. Now you start talkin' about how much work it is. What the hell do you think it's goin' to do, rain strawberries? Of course it takes work."

Mr. Richmond: "Well, I say—"

Mr. Davis: "There ain't no use tryin' to argue with you George."

Mr. Richmond: "You can't take it. I's goin' over and talk to the shoemaker." He leaves.

Mr. Davis: "You hate to lose your temper with an old guy like that, but he don't talk sense. He's like Gloomy Gus. Nothin' satisfies him. And there ain't no sense to a lot of his talk. You know there's a lot of places in town where they won't let him hang around any more. The boss is gettin' kind of tired of him comin, in here, too, but he hates to tell him. You know, the poor old guy, he's disagreeable and all that, but you kinda feel sorry for him."